
There are about 4.8 million Americans living with congestive heart failure today. In fact, it's one of the most common reasons people 65 and older go into the hospital. Fortunately, heart failure can be treated. Getting good medical care, following doctor's orders and learning about heart failure will help you lead a comfortable life.

You can help by taking your medicine as your doctor tells you, and by following your eating and exercise plans.



What medicine might I take?

- **Vasodilator**—lowers blood pressure and opens and relaxes blood vessels.
- **ACE Inhibitor**—lowers blood pressure and opens and relaxes blood vessels.
- **Diuretic**—helps your body get rid of extra water and sodium.
- **Digoxin**—helps your heart pump better.

What will help me get better?

- Visit the doctor and follow his or her advice.
- Read food labels and avoid foods high in salt or sodium.
- Start an aerobic exercise plan as your doctor advises.
- Keep up your interests and be upbeat!

My doctor's advice

Ask your doctor to fill in the blanks with recommendations that will help you recover.

Medicine Notes: _____

Diet Notes: Example: No salt allowed _____

Exercise Notes: _____

What should I watch out for?

Tell your doctor right away if...

- You gain 3 or more pounds in a day or so.
 - You see that your feet, ankles or other parts of your body are puffy.
 - It's hard to breathe.
 - You can't do what you could do the day before.
 - You have "the flu."
 - You get a fever.
 - You have chest pain.
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How can I learn more?

- Talk to your doctor, nurse or health care professional. Or call your American Heart Association at 1-800-242-8721.
 - If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
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Do you have questions or comments for your doctor?

- Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your doctor. For example:

How can my family help me?

Should I stay in bed?



South Carolina Department of Health
and Environmental Control

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Fighting Heart Disease and Stroke

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Your contributions to the American Heart Association or the American Stroke Association will support research that helps make publications like this possible.

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